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BABBLE OF THE BOULEVARD

(Special Correspondence of THE COLLECTOR)

PARIS, June 28, 1892.

IN a recent issue of the *Charivari* is a cut which represents one of the corners of the galleries of the Palais de l'Industrie. Two individuals with long hair, high-water pants and slouched hats are discussing the merits of an enormous and coarsely executed painting.

"But why do you always make your canvases so large?" asks one of them, referring to the picture in question.

"Because, you see," answers the other, "if they do not take a prize I can readily dispose of them to some ship owner. They make good sails, and serve to distract the sailors during their long voyages."

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Whether or not it was with the same idea that M. Albert Maignan painted his gigantic "Carpeaux," a picture which I fully described in my review of the Salon, I have been unable to learn. If it was not actually intended for a fore-royal it certainly possessed the requisite dimensions for the rag which sailors have such difficulty in furling of a dark night. In fact, had it not been for a mere accident, Monsieur Maignan's canvas might soon have been in active service firmly clewed to the yardarm of a French East Indiaman. The accident was the fact that a certain number of gentlemen, whose privilege it was to cast ballots, decided to give Maignan the most important *récompense* of the exhibit. They awarded him the Médaille d'Honneur. This was fortunate for Maignan, but equally unfortunate for a number of painters whose work assuredly deserved greater recognition at the hands of the voters. As the same dissatisfaction regarding the awarding of the prizes manifests itself every year, however, it has become quite useless to exercise oneself at all over the matter.

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The author of "Germinal" has at least the satisfaction of knowing that the successful candidate for the *fauteuil* left vacant by old Admiral Jurien de la Gravière is a writer and historian of acknowledged merit, and not a conceited young naval lieutenant.

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A well-known figure at the play-house on first nights, a regular attendant during the winter months at the literary and artistic gatherings of the gay capital, though still more familiar, perhaps, to the mutton-chopped advocates who frequent the Palais de Justice, is the Procureur Général of France, Monsieur Jules Quesnay de Beaurepaire. In English-speaking countries we have no such public official, no functionary of the law who wields at once such unlimited and absolute power as does the General Prosecutor of the French republic. Dumas has depicted him under the Bourbon dynasty. Eugene Sue, in his "Mysteries of Paris," has given us a striking picture of this austere and mighty officer of justice as well as of his Machiavelian *mouchards*. Monsieur de Beaurepaire, however, is no demigod, but a model of liberal-minded equity and gentle forbearance. Moreover, he is a bibliophile of no ordinary repute, and bibliophiles, according to the immortal Richard de Bury, are always the most amiable of men.

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Under the *nom de plume* of Jules de Glouvet, de Beaurepaire has written many amusing sketches for the *Revue de Paris*, *La Vie Parisienne* and other semi-facetious, semi-literary weeklies. A number of romances, including "Le Forestier," "L'Etude Chandoux" and "Croquis de Femmes," are also from his fertile pen, while several comedies, of which he is the author, have been successfully produced upon the stage of the Vaudeville. While his library is rich in the early classics, in the Elzevir and Aldine editions of the ancient prose writers, he has an equal passion for first editions of modern French poets and romancers. Monsieur de Beaurepaire is rapidly bald and white, though if the anarchists of Paris do not put an end to his existence, an undertaking which they threaten to carry into execution at a not far distant date, the popular Procureur will probably continue to grace the world of art, letters and jurisprudence for many years to come.

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The Historical Society of Anteuil and Passy has resolved to place tablets and bas-reliefs on the houses formerly inhabited by Boileau, Racine and Molière at the former suburb, and by Victor Hugo, Lamartine and Benjamin Franklin at the latter.

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One of the most interesting and instructive periodicals that is published in Paris is *L'Intermédiaire des Chercheurs et Curieux*. The little yellow-covered journal, devoted to the solution of literary, archaeological and bibliographical enigmas, or to the unearthing of artistic or historical facts and curiosities, makes its appearance three times a month, and is a welcome guest upon the collector's library table. The paper, the first issue of which was printed in 1864, under the editorship of Carle de Rash, is very much the same class of periodical as the English *Notes and Queries*. It is much superior, though, to the latter journal, both as to form, make-up and contents, while it serves a broader and more useful purpose. It frequently occurs to littéra-

teurs, scholars, antiquarians, bibliophiles and amateurs in general, that certain points, which either curiosity or necessity makes it important for them to know, are not to be found in the ordinary books of reference at their disposal, or it may be that the establishment of certain events or of the dates upon which they took place baffles all research. Again, if memory or the accuracy of the material in hand be at fault, the biographer, genealogist or historian desires to firmly establish a point before proceeding further. If he puts himself into correspondence with the wiseacres of the various antiquarian societies that exist on the Continent, the probability is that he will, in the end, be no more enlightened than at the beginning. If, on the contrary, he addresses himself to the *Intermédiaire*, the chances lie in the opposite direction, for some one of its numerous subscribers is bound to be both interested as well as informed upon the same subject as himself. The interrogations printed in the columns of the paper, moreover, may call forth not only one, but a score of answers, and herein lies its greatest value. Add to this a mass of material touching all questions pertaining to art and letters in general, and you have an exceptional publication.

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The present editor of the *Intermédiaire*, by the bye, is one of the best informed and most erudite scholars whose acquaintance it has been my good fortune to make. Monsieur Lucien Faucon has, during his eight years' directorship of the paper, made it even more interesting than it was before. He keeps well *en rapport* with the subscribers of his journal, and does not hesitate to stir them up with a personal letter when he fancies that this or that one is best fitted to give his judgment or opinion upon a certain disputed subject. He edits the little journal with both skill and ability, and one can scarcely pick up a daily paper in France without finding reprinted in its columns an interesting note or two from its encyclopedical pages.

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Another capital Parisian paper, devoted to subjects artistic, is the *Journal des Arts*, which, as its sub-title implies, is chiefly given over to reviews of the book and picture sales held at the Hôtel Drouot. From July to November it is published weekly, but during the winter months, when the sales follow each other in rapid succession, it makes its appearance just twice as often. Its editor, Auguste Daigny, has, as far as I know, only one superior in the field of art criticism, and being an indefatigable worker, he manages to write the greater part of the contents of his paper himself.

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Apropos of art and art publications, it is regrettable to find that the *Figaro Salon* has, under the editorship of Charles Yriarte, lost to a great extent that which made the periodical attractive under the direction of the late Albert Wolff. Not only is the text of ordinary merit, but the engravings seem to lack the required quality. Wolff was not only a graceful writer, but he exercised unusual skill in the selection of the subjects to be reproduced in the paper; for it must be remembered that bad pictures make equally bad reproductions. This year engraver, printer and publisher alike seem to have fallen short of the mark, while some of the other journals have been permitted to carry off the laurels.

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The *Gaulois* announces that one of the sensations of next year's Salon, provided the jury admits it, will be a huge biblical canvas already begun by Jean Bérard, and entitled "The Ascension." It represents the Saviour going up in a balloon!

JOHN PRESTON BEECHER.

The Secretary of the Treasury has directed that a set of United States coin, treasury notes and notable medals issued by the United States Government at various times be sent to Madrid, Spain, as a part of the United States exhibit at the exposition, which opens in September.

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Col. N. M. Rittenhouse, of Baltimore, Md., has lately come into possession of a family heirloom. His father died some time ago in Philadelphia, and in looking over matters of the household found a britania tea set of six pieces, made in Manchester, England, in 1678, brought to this country by his ancestors and handed down from generation to generation to the present one. It is stated that many prominent men of past generations drank tea out of the teapot of this set. There were no spoons in use in those early days and instead small tongs were used. Col. Rittenhouse prizes the articles very highly, and he proposes that they shall descend to his children, grandchildren, and so on.

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Mr. F. M. Crunden's annual report of the St. Louis Public Library (for 1890-91) is, as usual, effectively put together. The library has, he says, the enviable distinction of being "the only large library in the country that has received no gifts of any importance, either in money or books, from private sources." Some very curious examples are given on pp. 22-26 of reference lists furnished to applicants, of books or articles wanted of the librarian, and of questions asked him. Instructive, too, is the account of the reading-club formed, in connection with the library, in a colored school of the city, with samples of "the formal written reports that have been presented on books read."